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Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Letter dated 22 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the Cotonou Declaration and the final report adopted at the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held at Cotonou from 4 to 6 December 2000 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 39.

(*Signed*) Joel W. **Adechi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 22 March 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies

Cotonou, 4 to 6 December 2000

Peace, security, democracy and development

Cotonou Declaration

We, the ministers and representatives of new or restored democracies, meeting within the framework of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development, held at Cotonou, Benin, from 4 to 6 December 2000,

Reiterating our common adherence to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Considering the major changes taking place on the international scene and the aspiration of all peoples for an international order based on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including the strengthening and encouragement of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all,

Reaffirming that peace and security, democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing and that democracy is based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural system and on their full participation in all aspects of the life of society,

Reaffirming also that all human rights — civil, political, economic, social and cultural — must be promoted and protected in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the other international human rights instruments,

Bearing in mind, in particular, the Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in September 1997, according to which democracy is a universally recognized ideal as well as a goal, which is based on common values shared by peoples throughout the world community irrespective of cultural, political, social and economic differences,

Recalling the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted in June 1993 by the World Conference on Human Rights,

Recalling United Nations General Assembly resolution 53/243 of 13 September 1999, containing the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, which states that the fuller development of a culture of peace is integrally linked to promoting democracy, development and universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Recalling:

- the Manila Declaration adopted in June 1988 by the First International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which reaffirms the indissoluble link between peace, democracy and development,

- the Managua Declaration and Plan of Action adopted in July 1994 by the Second International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which reiterates the decision to support and promote the universal right to democracy and development,

- the Bucharest Final Document, entitled "Progress Review and Recommendations", adopted in September 1997 by the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which stresses the interdependence between democracy, development and good governance,

- the proceedings of the review conference on national conferences and other democratic transition processes in Africa, held in Cotonou in February 2000,

which assess the democratic transition processes and note the progress and setbacks of democracy in Africa,

- the Warsaw Declaration adopted in June 2000 by the ministerial conference entitled "Towards a Community of Democracies", which emphasizes the interdependence between peace, development, human rights and democracy,

- the Millennium Declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2000, which reaffirms the universal values and principles of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms and sets specific goals for peace, security, disarmament, development, poverty eradication and protection of the common environment,

- the Bamako Declaration adopted in November 2000 by the member States of the International Organization of la Francophonie, which proclaims the indissociable links between French-speaking peoples and democracy and defines strategies for consolidating the rule of law and monitoring democratic practice in the French-speaking countries,

Taking note of decisions 141 and 142 adopted in July 1999 by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, concerning, respectively, the principles of good governance, transparency and human rights which are essential elements for building representative and stable government and which contribute to conflict prevention, and the need to restore constitutional legality to member States whose Governments came to power through unconstitutional means.

Hereby adopt the present Declaration.

I. Peace, security and disarmament

1. We reaffirm our adherence to the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States and non-intervention in matters that fall essentially within the national jurisdiction of any State, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

2. We reaffirm our commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes.

3. We also reaffirm that primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security rests with the United Nations and we call upon the Member States to give the Organization the necessary means to build its capacity in the areas of preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacemaking, as well as post-conflict peace-building, and to increase its effectiveness.

4. We urge the States Members of the United Nations to use regional organizations, arrangements and agencies for dealing with matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

5. We urge regional organizations and agencies to promote and strengthen closer cooperation and coordination with the United Nations in order to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.

6. We reaffirm that disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons, can contribute significantly to the maintenance of international peace and security.

7. We call upon all States to accede to and implement the international conventions on disarmament and arms control.

8. We vigorously condemn all forms of international terrorism, as well as transnational crime in all its manifestations, and we pledge to take, individually and collectively, such measures as may be appropriate under international law, including international human rights law, to prevent and combat them.

9. We firmly support civil society and the non-governmental organizations that work for peace, security, democracy, development and human rights.

10. We undertake to promote and strengthen a culture of peace within our respective countries and at the regional and international levels, in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 53/243 of 13 September 1999, entitled "Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace", especially during the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010, proclaimed in General Assembly resolution 53/25.

II. Democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms

11. We recognize that undeniable progress has been made throughout the world over the past 10 years in the area of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, despite some setbacks. We must therefore pursue our efforts to promote a culture of democracy and to strengthen the rule of law and respect for all the human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in international law. Accordingly, we recognize the link between democracy and human rights, as mentioned in the resolution entitled "Promoting and consolidating democracy", adopted by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on 25 April 2000 and by the United Nations General Assembly on 4 December 2000.

12. We solemnly reaffirm that the will of the people is the basis for the power of the public authorities. This will must be expressed freely in periodic, fair, pluralistic elections, free of intimidation, conducted by universal, equal suffrage and secret balloting and under the supervision of an independent institution.

13. We pledge to:

- Consolidate and deepen democracy by promoting political pluralism and protecting fundamental rights and freedoms;
- Promote greater participation by citizens, particularly women, including minorities, in the decision-making process;
- Guarantee the rule of law and the separation of constitutional powers;
- Promote good governance and fight corruption in our countries;
- Guarantee the right to information and the independence and freedom of the media, while respecting other freedoms;
- Develop and strengthen civic education in order to make citizens more aware of their rights and duties and of the responsibilities of government institutions;

- Contribute to the emergence and consolidation of an organized, strong and free civil society, which is an essential element of democracy.

14. We vigorously condemn all military coups d'état, all forms of terrorism and violence against democratic, freely elected Governments, all undemocratic means of gaining, wielding and staying in power and all unconstitutional changes of government.

15. We reaffirm that public authorities must be accountable for their acts.

16. We undertake to promote a culture of democracy in all its dimensions and with full respect for human rights.

17. We solemnly reaffirm that:

- All human rights and fundamental freedoms are inherent to all human beings;
- All human rights, including the right to development, are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated;
- All human rights must be promoted and protected in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the other major international human rights instruments.

18. We pledge to:

- Fulfil our obligations under the international human rights instruments, particularly those relating to the monitoring mechanisms established under those instruments to ensure their implementation,
- Promote and facilitate ratification of all the human rights treaties and protocols adopted in the framework of the United Nations and regional organizations;
- Promote, in our States, education on human rights and a culture of peace, as envisaged in international and regional human rights instruments;
- Promote in each State the adoption of national human rights programmes to improve the promotion and protection of those rights;
- Accord appropriate treatment to refugees, returnees, migrant workers and displaced persons, in keeping with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law.

19. We recognize that the democratization process is not limited to States but also extends to international relations and the decision-making mechanisms of international organizations and institutions if we are to ensure a just and equitable international order.

20. We urge the continuation and expansion of activities carried out by the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations, Member States and non-governmental organizations to promote and consolidate democracy within the framework of international cooperation and to establish a democratic political culture through the promotion and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the mobilization of civil society and other appropriate means for supporting a democratic form of government.

III. Development, poverty eradication and environment

21. We recognize that the right to development, as established by international law, is a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights, and that the human person is the central subject of development.

22. In addition, we recognize that every country has the inalienable right to determine freely the form and means of its development.

23. We recognize that our countries face great difficulties in ensuring sustainable development and eradicating poverty, and that international inequalities are hampering the development efforts of the least developed countries and of middle-income countries.

24. Accordingly, we undertake, inter alia:

- To create, at the national and international levels, conditions which are conducive to sustainable development by promoting, in particular, good governance, the rule of law, efforts to combat corruption in all its forms and reform of the international financial system;
- To unite our efforts towards economic and social development, in particular through poverty eradication, which is a means of promoting and preserving democratic development. Poverty eradication, as a primary goal, should be addressed using a cross-sectoral approach encompassing social development. It may be achieved through improvements in priority sectors such as education, health, food security, drinking water supply and housing;
- To promote gender equality with a view to achieving full equality between men and women, as well as equitable development which is sustainable, free of all violence, respectful of human rights and conducive to the full and harmonious development of the human person, taking into account the specific cultural characteristics of each country;
- To promote women's economic independence and to guarantee the full exercise of their economic, political and social rights and responsibilities;
- To prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women, girls and children;
- To give high priority to the rights of the child and to child protection, development and survival, in particular by preventing and eliminating all forms of child exploitation, ending the recruitment of child soldiers and gradually and effectively eliminating forms of child labour which are inconsistent with international standards;
- To place special emphasis on young people's education and participation in democratic life.

25. We urge States and international organizations to lend significant support to our efforts in this regard.

26. We undertake to work towards the eradication of endemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, which are not only a public health problem, but also a serious threat to development.

27. We support all initiatives for external debt relief or cancellation, and encourage all efforts to find lasting solutions to the problem of the debt burden of new or restored democracies.

28. We call upon States and international financial institutions to provide our countries with more substantial development assistance based on our real priorities and needs.

29. We undertake:

- To cooperate in solving environmental problems by promoting a participatory approach aimed at integrating the objectives of Agenda 21 into national sustainable development policies and strategies;
- To set up and strengthen early warning and rapid response systems in relation to natural disasters, with the consent of the Governments of the countries concerned.

We, the Ministers and representatives of new or restored democracies, meeting in the framework of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development, held in Cotonou, Benin, from 4 to 6 December 2000,

Noting the undeniable progress which our countries have made in the democratization process,

Convinced of the need to coordinate the actions of our States in order to enhance their effectiveness,

Recognizing the need for greater subregional, regional and international cooperation to consolidate and deepen the democratization process, not only in our countries, but also internationally,

Recommend that:

Organizations of civil society

1. Take all appropriate measures at the national, subregional and regional levels to strengthen their cooperation with their counterparts in other countries.

The private sector

2. Take regional or international initiatives to strengthen democracy throughout the world.

Donor countries and the international community

3. Give greater priority to the allocation of resources for programmes on governance, democracy and the participation of civil society;

4. Substantially alleviate the debt burden of new or restored democracies as a means of strengthening their democratization process and economic development;

5. Coordinate their work on the relationships among democratization, development and governance with new or restored democracies;

6. Organize joint conferences at which government representatives, parliamentarians, local elected officials and representatives of non-governmental organizations would meet to discuss issues relating to democratization;

7. Help new or restored democracies, at their request and with the assistance of international and academic institutions, to establish indicators for analysing the progress made in the democratization process.

The United Nations system

8. Further promote dialogue and, in a spirit of cooperation, pursue its efforts to deepen its understanding of issues relating to democracy;

9. Make wider use of the local expertise available in developing countries;

10. Work in closer cooperation with a broad range of local actors to promote and entrench democratic culture in the countries concerned;

11. Create a data bank on democratic development which would include information on basic problems relating to democracy;

12. Draw up a roster of experts specializing in basic issues relating to democracy, particularly experts from new or restored democracies;

13. Prepare and develop, within the United Nations system, integrated assistance programmes to strengthen democracy, which would be coordinated within the United Nations system using extrabudgetary resources;

14. Mobilize resources for the implementation of integrated programmes and common strategies among various countries to promote and strengthen democratic development;

15. Provide assistance, in the case of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, for democratic reforms, tailoring such assistance to each country's circumstances and needs;

16. Pursue, with respect to the United Nations system, the consideration of new ideas and suggestions concerning democracy and good governance put forward by Governments and representatives of academia and civil society.

Follow-up mechanism

For the implementation of the above recommendations, we urge the President of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies to strengthen the follow-up mechanism established at the Third Conference.

We also call upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to designate a focal point in the United Nations system to support the efforts of Member States to consolidate democracy, and to provide assistance to the follow-up mechanism for the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies.

The follow-up mechanism shall be responsible for providing assistance to new or restored democracies, at their request, in:

17. Drawing up a list of objectives for democratization programmes and a timetable indicating possible benchmarks for assessing their implementation;

18. Drawing up a concise list of indicators which are acceptable and useful to the participating States;

19. Identifying programmes and enabling new or restored democracies to participate in United Nations programmes that deal with issues relating to democratization and good governance;

20. Promoting and strengthening regional and subregional officers for democratization programmes;

21. Identifying the preconditions for attracting investment to encourage democratization efforts;

22. Identifying and carrying out programmes that focus on the human person instead of focusing exclusively on institutions.

Done at Cotonou, 6 December 2000

Final report

A. Place and date of the Conference

The Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, whose theme was "Democracy, Peace, Security and Development", was held at Cotonou, Benin, from 4 to 6 December 2000. The Conference was organized by the Government of the Republic of Benin, the host country, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme. In addition to the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie, the following States provided financial and logistical assistance for the organization of the Conference: Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland and the United States of America.

B. Participants

Representatives of the following States participated in the Conference: Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, the Comoros, the Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, the Czech Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, the Holy See, Hungary, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liberia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Macedonia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Morocco, Moldova, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nepal, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Russia, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States of America, Vanuatu, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The following international organizations were represented: the United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the International Organization of la Francophonie, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Development Bank, the Network of African Regulatory Bodies, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the Regional African Satellite Communications System (RASCOM), the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

Representatives of 51 non-governmental organizations also attended the Conference as observers.

Distinguished invitees included Their Excellencies the Heads of State of Mali, Niger and Senegal, Presidents Alpha Oumar Konaré, Mamadou Tandja and Abdoulaye Wade, respectively, and several eminent persons from Benin, including former President Emile Derlin Zinsou.

C. Inaugural meeting

His Excellency Mr. Mathieu Kérékou, President of the Republic of Benin; declared open the Conference on 4 December 2000. The opening ceremony began with an introductory and welcoming address by His Excellency Mr. Kolawolé A. Idji, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Benin, who was followed to the podium by Mr. Mihaï Dobré, the representative of the country that chaired the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held at Bucharest, Romania, in 1997.

The Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, also delivered an address.

Two Heads of State, His Excellency Mr. Mamadou Tandja, President of the Republic of Niger and His Excellency Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, President of the Republic of Mali, who were invited for the occasion by President Kérékou, also addressed the Conference.

A cultural presentation was offered by a group of Beninese actors, the duo of Bio and Kossi, who combined songs and poetry to deliver a satirical but poignant message on the theme of the Conference, namely, "Democracy, Peace, Security and Development".

Lastly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, delivered a message to the Conference and the world prior to the opening of the Conference by President Kérékou.

The texts of the messages read and addresses delivered during the inaugural meeting are contained in the annex to this report.

D. Election of officers

At its first plenary meeting, on 4 December, the Conference elected by acclamation a Bureau comprised of six members, namely, a Chairman, four Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur, as follows:

Chairman:

His Excellency Mr. Kolawolé A. Idji, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Benin

Vice-Chairmen:

Her Excellency Ms. Dhlamini Nkosazana-Zuma, Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Africa

Ambassador Carl Marshall, High Commissioner of Jamaica to Nigeria

Mr. Lauro Baja, Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines

Mr. Eugen Carpov, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Moldova

Rapporteur:

Professor Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, international consultant

E. Adoption of the agenda

At the first plenary meeting, on 4 December 2000, on the proposal of the Chairman, the Conference adopted the following provisional agenda:

1. Opening of the Conference by the Head of State of Benin.
2. Opening of the first plenary meeting by the Head of the Romanian delegation.
3. Election of the officers of the Conference.
4. Induction of the members of the Bureau.
5. Special address by the Chairman of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies.
6. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
7. Organization of work.
8. General debate on national experiences in democracy, peace, security and development and regional reports.
9. Parallel meetings: thematic debates on:
   - Democracy, good governance and development;
   - Participation of youth and women in the process of democratization and development;
   - Democracy and the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts.
10. Consideration and adoption of the Cotonou Declaration.
11. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Conference.
12. Closure of the Conference.

F. Documentation

The reports and documents listed below were available at the Conference:

1. Regional studies (providing independent viewpoints on the process of democratic transformation in different regions):

- Africa, by Professor A. I. Asiwaju of the History Department, University of Lagos, Nigeria, and Professor Amady Aly Dieng of Senegal;

- Latin America and the Caribbean by Professor Russell Crandall of the Department of Political Science of Davidson College, United States of America, and Professor Rupert Lewis of the Department of Government of the University of the West Indies, Jamaica;

- Asia, by Dr. L. M. Singhvi of India;

- Central and Eastern Europe by Professor Mihaly Simai, Hungary.

2. Thematic studies:

- Democracy, good governance and development, by Richard Banégas, editor-in-chief of *Politique Africaine*, in Paris; Professor Christof Heyns, Director of the Center for Human Rights of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, and Professor Tessy Bakary, of the Department of Political Science of the University of Laval, Canada;

- Participation of youth and women in the process of democratization and development, by Professor Niara Sudarkasa of Florida Atlantic University, United States of America;

- Democracy and the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts, by Dr. Dominique Bangoura (Paris) and Dr. Julian Hottinger (Switzerland).

3. National studies by experts on the national experience in the consolidation of democracy in Benin, the host country:

- Women, by Dr. Amélie Degbélo;

- Youth, by Dr. C. Christophe Kougniazondé;

- Democracy, by Professor Théodore Holo;

- Good governance, human rights and development, by Professor Philippe Noudjénoumé.

G. Organization of work

The deliberations of the Conference took place in plenary meeting, in three thematic meetings and in three parallel meetings during which the draft of the Cotonou Declaration was discussed and amended by interested delegations.

The general debate in plenary was held over four meetings.

The representatives of States and organizations participated in the debates through the statements of their heads of delegation. The debates on the regional studies also took place in two of the plenary meetings, while the fifth and final meeting was devoted to the consideration and adoption of the Cotonou Declaration and the final report.

The following studies were discussed at the second and third plenary meetings, on 5 December 2000:

- "Sharing of experiences on best practices in the area of democracy-building (relationship between peace, security, democracy and development) in non-French-speaking African States", by Anthony Asiwaju;

- "Experiences of best practices in democracy-building and in the relationship between peace, security, democracy and development", by Amady Aly Dieng;
- "The confining conditions of democratic transitions and consolidation in troubled States in Latin America: the case of Peru and Colombia", by Russell Crandall;
- "Sharing of experiences on best practices in the area of democracy-building in the Caribbean: the relationship between peace, security, democracy and development", by Rupert Lewis;
- "Reflection on democracy in Asia: challenges and the way forward", by L. M. Singhvi.

The remainder of the report offers a brief overview of the general debate and thematic debates as well as a report on the work on the Cotonou Declaration.

General debate

In view of the large number of countries represented at this Conference (over 100) the general debate could not but reflect the diversity of national experiences in achieving and preserving democracy. Most of the statements made, however, may be grouped around the four major issues suggested by the Chairman of the Conference to guide the discussions, namely:

1. What are the best practices for the strengthening of democracy?
2. How can conflicts be prevented, managed and settled in ways that would preserve democracy?
3. How could the participation of youth and women in the process of democratization be maximized?
4. What are the obstacles to the consolidation of democracy?

A broad consensus exists around the idea that, despite the universality of democratic norms and principles, there is no single model of democracy for all countries of the world. Each country must choose its own route to democracy and its own pace for the consolidation of democracy. At the same time, however, democracy is inconceivable without human rights and, in particular, the rights of women, children and minorities and it requires the gradual expansion of the political space in order to guarantee the full exercise of the political, economic, social and cultural rights of all. Moreover, as the Secretary-General indicated in his message, democracy and the rule of law are indissociable. The constitutional and legal framework protects the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals and groups and economic development cannot be achieved without the rule of law, transparency in the management of public affairs and the accountability of managers.

Building a democracy that is rooted in a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity is one way of strengthening the capacity to prevent, manage and settle conflicts, since conflicts based on differences of identity are often the source of social exclusion, intolerance and unequal access to the resources that populations need to survive. The best way to combat economic and social insecurity and thus to prevent demagogues from exploiting it to fan conflicts of identity is to educate and to give greater responsibility to those most affected by this insecurity. Peace is an essential aspect of democracy insofar as it allows communities to use available

resources and infrastructure to improve their quality of life instead of destroying it through inter-ethnic or inter-religious violence. In addition to the general debate, a discussion on the applicability of democratic principles to the prevention and management of conflicts took place at one of the thematic meetings of the Conference.

Like the question of conflicts, the participation of young people and women in the process of democratization has been another of the major themes of the Conference to the point where an entire thematic meeting was devoted to this question. Statements on the challenge faced by women and young people in many new or restored democracies were made in connection with the need to provide them with more educational and employment opportunities and to protect them from the nefarious consequences of war, social dislocation and disease. In Africa, in particular, many young people do not attend school and have no gainful employment. They therefore constitute a vulnerable target group for recruitment into the armed bands of warlords and political extremists. The consolidation of democracy requires greater efforts to offer them hope in the future through opportunities for education and employment.

Lastly, as regards obstacles to the consolidation of democracy, participants frequently mentioned poverty and its root causes that lie in local, national and international economic and social structures. Local structures that create and perpetuate poverty include unequal access to vital resources such as land and the lack of other types of productive capital. As regards national structures, mention should be made of the absence or at times restrictions on democratic rights without which ordinary citizens lack any say in decisions concerning the distribution of resources and allocation of funds needed for development projects. As regards international structures, mention should be made firstly of the inequity of the markets in goods and capital and in particular of the burden of the foreign debt.

The solutions proposed to respond to these challenges include decentralization as a means of governance that permits local communities to take responsibility for their own affairs at the national level and external debt relief at the international level.

During one of the general debate meetings, a message to the Conference from Nadine Gordimer, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature and a citizen of South Africa, was communicated to participants. The text of the message is also contained in the annex to this report.

Thematic debates

As indicated above, three thematic meetings were held during the Conference and more precisely on Tuesday, 5 December.

The first thematic meeting, on democracy and good governance, was based on the communication from Mr. Richard Banégas, entitled "Democracy and good governance: ambiguities and limitations of the political conditionalities attached to international aid".

The second thematic meeting, on youth and women, was based on the communication from Ms. Niara Sudarkasa, entitled "Democracy and development: meeting the challenges to the equitable participation and progress of women and youth".

The third thematic meeting, devoted to the question of conflicts, examined the communications of Ms. Dominique Bangoura on "the application of democratic principles in the prevention and management of conflict in Africa" and Mr. Julian Hottinger, entitled "Civil society's role in the resolution of conflicts in post-settlement peace-building in Africa: eleven lessons learned".

In accordance with the programme of work adopted, thematic debates were organized to enrich the general debate as well as the analyses and recommendations contained in the Cotonou Declaration. Summaries of these debates will be published in the Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies at the same time as the present report and the addresses of the eminent persons who participated in the Conference.

Cotonou Declaration

The main conclusions and recommendations of the Conference are contained in the Cotonou Declaration.

Amendments to and finalization of the text of the Declaration were completed in the two parallel sessions held on Tuesday, 5 December, moderated by a bureau comprised of:

- Ambassador Joël W. Adéchi, Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations;
- Ambassador Cyrille Sagbo, Special Adviser to the National Coordinator of the Conference; and
- Professor Georges Nzongola, Rapporteur.

A third session was held on Wednesday, 6 December.

H. Adoption of the Cotonou Declaration

At its fifth plenary meeting, held on Wednesday, 6 December, the Conference adopted the Cotonou Declaration, which contains the final recommendations of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies.

I. Host of the next Conference

Mongolia and Yemen have offered to host the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. The participants agreed that the follow-up mechanism provided for in the Cotonou Declaration should undertake consultations with these two countries to determine the venue of the next Conference.

J. Closing ceremony

The closing ceremony began with an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Benin, His Excellency Mr. Kolawole A. Idji, who summarized the discussions and conclusions of the Conference.

Professor Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja next took the floor and read the recommendations contained in the Cotonou Declaration.

Three eminent persons then took the floor to make statements. These were the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Mr. Mark Malloch Brown; the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, His Excellency Mr. Eriya Kategaya; and His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, who delivered an important message on democracy and on the African and Senegalese experiences in this area.

In conclusion, His Excellency Mr. Mathieu Kérékou, President of the Republic of Benin, the host country of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, delivered the closing address.